

News & Views

SUMMER EDITION

UNITY

by Father Eugene Wolf, Spiritual Advisor

One of the important things for us to do to support one another is to get together which the LDCCW does. There is something about being together that binds us together. I experienced that very thing at Priest Unity Days June 22-24 ending with the ordination of four new priests for our diocese. We don't always think alike but there is one common goal - to do the best we can in our priestly role. And that priestly role means to use our God-given gifts for the good of others to strengthen God's kingdom here on earth for that eternal kingdom.

I've had the privilege to be with the ladies of our diocese and beyond for over ten years, 1/6 of my being a priest, and God has blessed all of us. Our paths would not have been so joined if Fr. Kunz, Now Monsignor Kunz, had not, in the name of the bishop, asked me if I would take the position of Spiritual Advisor for the La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

Knowing I'm slowing down, it was great to be present to witness the priesthood handed down by a bishop with the fullness of the priesthood to the four young men who said yes to the call. We pray for priests and for more to hear the call and follow through with it.

Ladies, you are an inspiration to me and to one another as I have observed. May God keep us on the right track with His divine mercy and forgiveness. May the saints who have gone before us constantly intercede for us to give us the courage and strength we need.

May God bless us all.

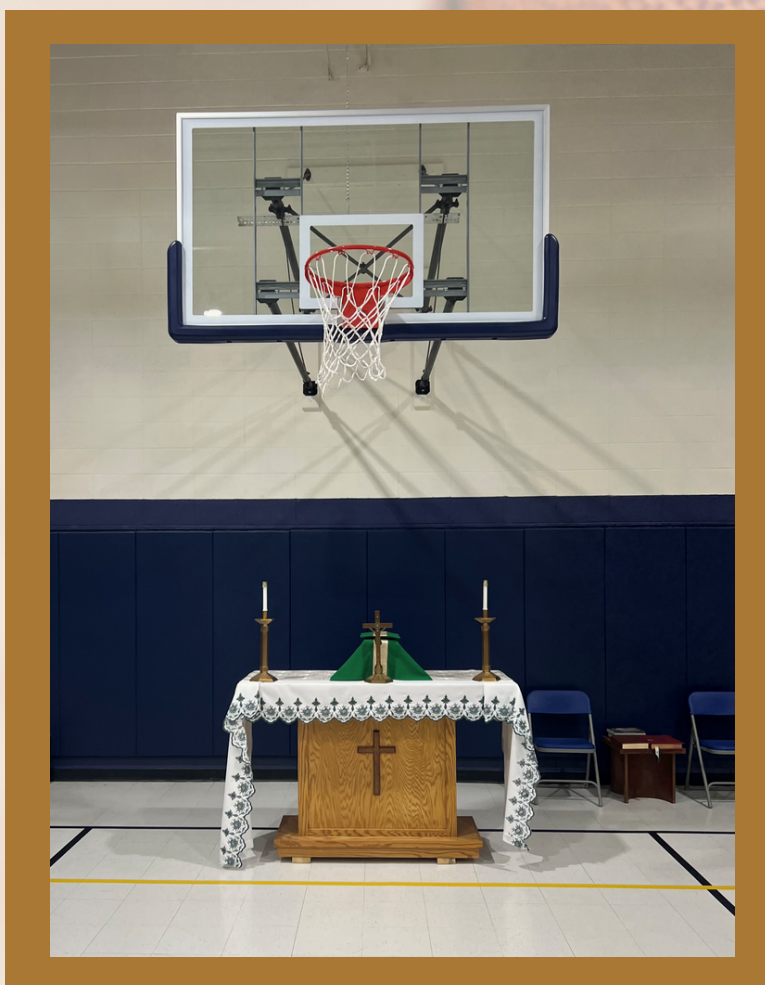


Pray or Play?

By Susan Tully, President

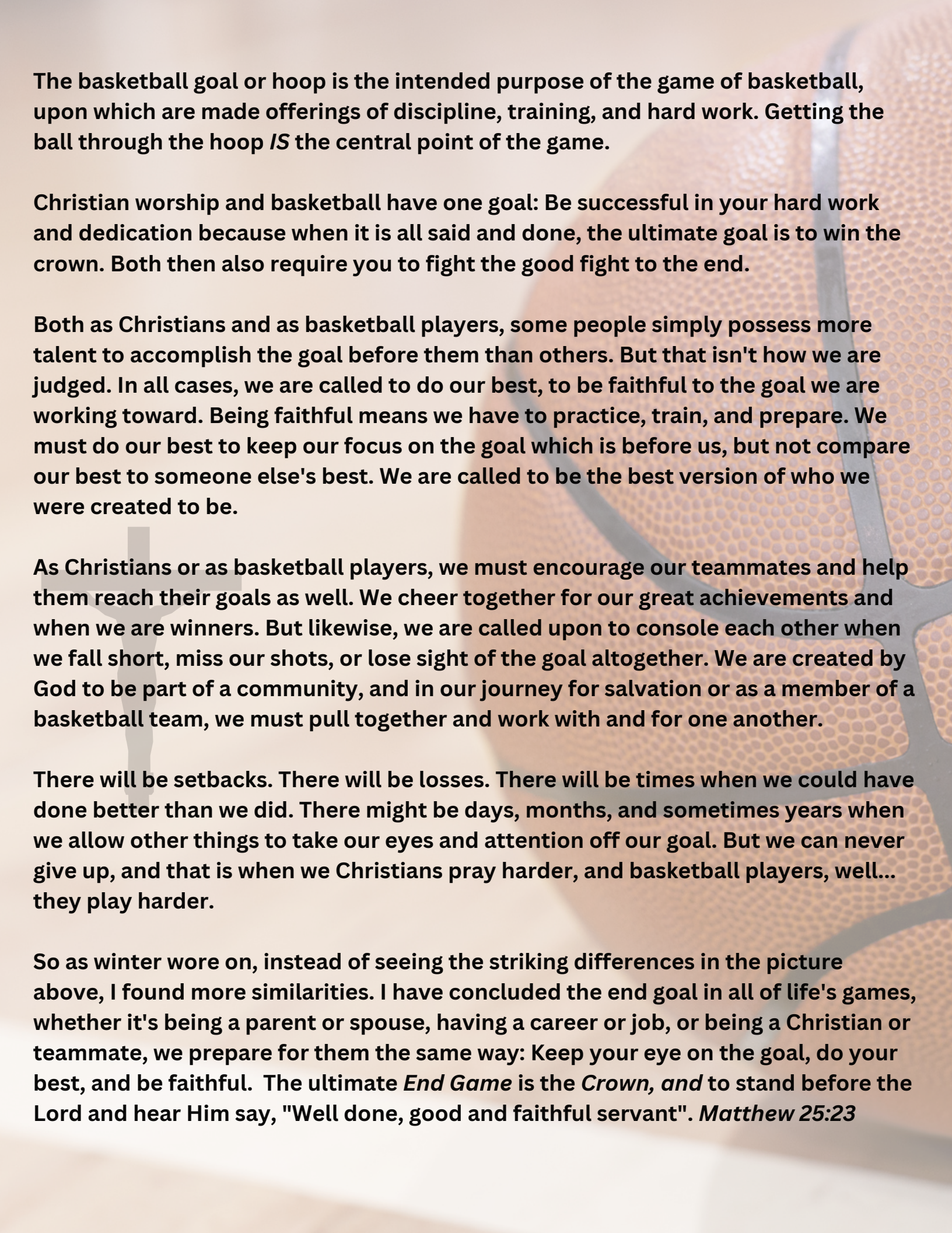


Like many parishes, our church, St. Mary's in Richland Center, was in dire need of some upgrades and refurbishing. The Diocesan-wide program, "*Inspired by the Spirit*" funding raising campaign, provided the necessary monies for our parish to begin our refurbishing project. So while the contractors worked on painting walls, installing new flooring, refinishing pews and 60 years' worth of miscellaneous much-needed improvements, our parish met each week for all three (3) Masses in the school gymnasium over the winter.



It was at the first Mass in the school gymnasium that I felt called to ponder and study the irony of our setting, as seen in the picture above. Prior to Mass each week, I found myself thinking about the goal of both the Altar and the game of basketball. Similarities? maybe... but if so, how? They seemed completely opposite.

The Altar is a structure upon which offerings such as sacrifices, are made for religious purposes, a place of consecration, and a place to commemorate our encounter with God. The Altar *IS* always the center point of our worship.



The basketball goal or hoop is the intended purpose of the game of basketball, upon which are made offerings of discipline, training, and hard work. Getting the ball through the hoop *IS* the central point of the game.

Christian worship and basketball have one goal: Be successful in your hard work and dedication because when it is all said and done, the ultimate goal is to win the crown. Both then also require you to fight the good fight to the end.

Both as Christians and as basketball players, some people simply possess more talent to accomplish the goal before them than others. But that isn't how we are judged. In all cases, we are called to do our best, to be faithful to the goal we are working toward. Being faithful means we have to practice, train, and prepare. We must do our best to keep our focus on the goal which is before us, but not compare our best to someone else's best. We are called to be the best version of who we were created to be.

As Christians or as basketball players, we must encourage our teammates and help them reach their goals as well. We cheer together for our great achievements and when we are winners. But likewise, we are called upon to console each other when we fall short, miss our shots, or lose sight of the goal altogether. We are created by God to be part of a community, and in our journey for salvation or as a member of a basketball team, we must pull together and work with and for one another.

There will be setbacks. There will be losses. There will be times when we could have done better than we did. There might be days, months, and sometimes years when we allow other things to take our eyes and attention off our goal. But we can never give up, and that is when we Christians pray harder, and basketball players, well... they play harder.

So as winter wore on, instead of seeing the striking differences in the picture above, I found more similarities. I have concluded the end goal in all of life's games, whether it's being a parent or spouse, having a career or job, or being a Christian or teammate, we prepare for them the same way: Keep your eye on the goal, do your best, and be faithful. The ultimate *End Game* is the *Crown*, and to stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant". *Matthew 25:23*

Because No Marriage is Beyond Hope

By Marie Fleisner



Joan and Jack (not their real names) had been married for 12 years. They had three children, worked full time, had a beautiful house, and were involved in their church. To the outside world, they looked like the perfect family. But Joan was miserable in her marriage. She and Jack never talked, shared their feelings, and were never intimate. Their days were spent working, and their nights were spent doing separate things. Jack traveled for business at least one weekend a month, while she was busy with the kids' activities. Most days they were like the proverbial ships passing in the night.

When they had married, she had felt like a princess, with Jack as her knight in shining armor. They used to spend hours talking. Now, they never talked at all. What had happened to them? What had happened to love? Then one day Jack came home and told her he wanted a divorce; he just didn't love her anymore. Joan was devastated. Was this it? But as a Catholic, she didn't believe in divorce, so she went to her priest, who recommended Retrouvaille. Retrouvaille is for hurting couples, like Joan and Jack. Despite his misgivings, Jack agreed to give Retrouvaille a try.

What is Retrouvaille? I will start by saying what Retrouvaille is not: it is not marriage counseling or group counseling. No one in the ministry (except the priest) is a professional. It is not a retreat, seminar, social gathering, or religious conversion experience. Retrouvaille is a peer ministry, led by other married couples who have experienced pain and disappointment in their marriages. They share their experiences with hurting couples, beginning with a weekend, using tools developed to help couples reconnect and communicate with one another because the number one reason couples drift apart begins with a failure to communicate. Retrouvaille provides communication tools, particularly for couples to communicate their feelings to one another because it is really more important – and much harder – to communicate your feelings than to communicate facts or thoughts.

For example, it is easy for me as a wife, to tell my husband that he neglected to take out the trash for a third day in a row. That is a fact. However, I may feel frustrated and upset about that fact, and I may hold those feelings inside until they boil over at some point down the road, when I explode in anger. Retrouvaille teaches couples tools to share their feelings safely and meaningfully.

Another reason couples come to Retrouvaille is due to something we call “the married singles lifestyle.” The married singles lifestyle is a slow, innocently-begun, often unconscious change in behavior after marriage, rather than an outright decision to live an independent and self-centered existence. In fact, it seems to be the way everybody is in marriage. But it is not the way marriage is meant to be. One spouse might see very little wrong with their marriage, while the other finds themselves feeling alone and miserable.

Because No Marriage is Beyond Hope Continued.....

The married singles lifestyle is ultimately rooted in selfishness by focusing on “me” instead of “us.” It erodes marital closeness and slowly leads couples to non-involvement with one another. The tools we teach in Retrouvaille help couples recognize and overcome the married singles lifestyle.

Of course, couples do come to Retrouvaille with serious problems; problems like infidelity, addictions, blended family issues, and others. While Retrouvaille does not have the resources to deal with things like addictions or abuse (we recommend couples seek professional help for those issues), the tools and support we provide through Retrouvaille can still be (and have been) successfully used by hundreds of thousands of couples world-wide to heal their marriages.

So, how does Retrouvaille work? Retrouvaille begins with a weekend experience (Friday night through Sunday afternoon). Couples spend the weekend listening to presentations by three couples (who have previously made weekends of their own and have been trained as presenters –this is a peer ministry) and a priest, who share their stories and provide tools and opportunities for the couples to then use those tools to communicate with each other. The weekend is then followed by 12 post-sessions (usually combined into six 4-hour sessions). Then there is a monthly support group that couples are invited to attend where other area couples get together to enjoy some fellowship and share relationship-building activities.

While Retrouvaille is essentially a “grassroots” ministry, it has a long history. It began over 45 years ago in Canada and now exists in over 27 countries around the world. There are Retrouvaille communities in every state in the United States (four in Wisconsin). We are governed by an International Board; each community has a board, and communities band together as a region (Wisconsin is part of Region 8, which includes Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, and North and South Dakota.)

How do couples register and how much does it cost? Couples can find information and register on our International Website (<https://helpourmarriage.org/>). Costs vary depending on the part of the country/world the couple lives in. In Wisconsin, the registration cost is \$300, but we never turn any couple away if they can't pay. This doesn't cover the entire weekend's cost, so we ask couples to consider donating at the end of the weekend. The donation is anonymous, and only our finance knows who made a donation. After the initial cost, there are no other costs.

My husband Tom and I are very involved in our Retrouvaille Community. We were community coordinators of Central Wisconsin Retrouvaille for 8 years; we are currently the secretary couple for Region 8; and we are part of the Standing Outline Review Committee for the International Retrouvaille Board. We are also weekend Retrouvaille presenters and a mentor couple. Saint John Paul II once said, “God is a communion of love, and in marriage couples share in God's eternal exchange of love.” And Pope Benedict praised Retrouvaille for offering “hope for the couples who have lost it.” Tom and I are honored and humbled to be part of that hope.



Meeting Chris Stefanick

By Candace McGrath, Vice President



Chris Stefanick is a well-known Catholic speaker, writer, and was the Youth Minister for the Diocese of La Crosse, at one time. He also wrote and updated the Chosen Confirmation Program my Religious Education catechists use to form our young people and prepare them for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Chris has so much joy which with his enthusiasm he spreads to others. In fact, his book, which is incredible, is named, “Living Joy.”

My first encounter with Chris was during a 10th Grade Confirmation Parent’s Meeting. I am the Coordinator of Religious Education, and I assisted our catechist, Dr. Andrew Wright, by getting donations from private individuals, as well as from our PCCW, to pay for the program. Chris was on the DVD, at the meeting, introducing the Chosen Program, his children loved, and he made learning about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ fun. Instantly I was a fan!

During Covid I got to know Chris really well. The schools were closed. The restaurants were closed. The bars were closed. Yes, even the churches were closed. My faith was brought to the test. We started having Confirmation Classes via Zoom. Technology is nice when it works.

Every week, the Confirmation Students, the catechists, and I would meet using our computers, and watch the short videos, read the textbook together, and accept the weekly challenges. On August 15, 2020, the Feast Day of our Lady of the Assumption, our parish’s patron saint, our students were confirmed.

Last year, the Diocese of La Crosse put on a Virtual Retreat with Chris as our online speaker. A few of us from St. Mary’s met to watch him and be inspired by his message. Chris joined us from his car. His mother-in-law was in the hospital. He explained this was not a reason to be down. We have life. We should always be joyful and spread our joy to others. He was fantastic. I also signed up for his “Two Minute Tuesdays” which are two minute videos of him.

So, about a month ago, I found out Chris Stefanick was going to be in person, in Marshfield. I invited my PCCW, but no one wanted to come. Then the big day came, Wednesday, March 15, 2023. A friend asked me at lunch if I was going to go. She said she had seen him speak and he was incredible. There was a two-hour drive and I went.

Chris was amazing. I sat in the third pew and when he was talking, he came up right next to me. One of his best stories was about his son Joey who was only four at the time. He was out camping in the woods with his family and Joey had just disappeared. They called his name and Joey didn’t respond. Chris walked out into a pond and figured his son must have drowned. With all he had inside of him, as a father, he prayed to God. He said, Lord, you’ve given me a good life with many blessings. I pray to you to take it all back and give me my son. It was a scary prayer. They found Joey and God didn’t kill Chris. This really spoke to him about how God is our Father and loves us so very much.

Afterwards, I was the first in line to talk to Chris. I asked about his mother-in-law who had good days and bad days. He was pleased I had read his book and driven from Richland Center. Then he gave me a hug.

This was a great experience. There were a couple of people I knew, in the church. I drove home and saw a dozen deer. God loves me and continues to be my inspiration.



Dear Council Sisters of the La Crosse DCCW,

Happy Spring to my council Sisters and friends, whom I have gotten to know throughout my 19 years of leadership. These years have been some of the best anyone could have ever wished for. Thank you all for being a part of my leadership story.

Congratulations and thank you for completing what I hope was a very successful Council Sunday Collection. Some know the collection as Low Sunday or Mercy Sunday. Regardless, it is a collection that helps pay for all the ministries of the La Crosse Diocesan Council of Catholic Women and to further the mission of the National Council of Catholic Women. I arranged it so that I was also able to, for the first time, additionally, attend another parish, St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral in La Crosse, and observed those council ladies taking up the collection. It leaves one so proud sitting there in the pew knowing it is the one weekend when all council sisters are involved in the same significant task across one's entire diocese. Also, throughout the parishes in the Diocese, I know many of you are busy with rummage sales, plant sales, craft sales, assisting in funeral luncheons, and, of course, participating in prayer groups, leading the rosary, etc. Thank you for all that you do and more.

What is ongoing in the Province: One resolution came forward from our past Convention in Minneapolis involving encouraging and promoting praying the rosary daily and promoting the First Saturday devotion of the Rosary, Mass, and confession requested by Our Lady of Fatima. As Province Director, I will join other Province Directors in reporting how well, as a Province, we are doing in these areas at our upcoming convention. It is a resolution that focuses on our ladies at the parish level. Preciseness would be difficult but if we could have a ballpark of what our ladies participate in, as an example, First Saturday devotion of the Rosary, etc., that would be appreciated.

Speaking of convention, a reminder that Convention 2023 is open for registering. The deadline for registering for the 2023 Salt Lake City Convention titled Path of Renewed Encounter is July 15. I hope you are able to join us for this convention from August 24-26.

Also, if you are changing officers within your Deaneries, please remember to complete the form out in www.ldccw.org. That will help the Diocese as, with any communication, it needs to reach the correct person(s) to keep the link of communicating strong. A copy also then gets passed on to NCCW to update their files.

I am always so very appreciative and humbled whenever I receive an invite; so, until we meet again and, hopefully, soon, I hope you continue having a Happy Spring and the rest of the seasons. Lu



Living the Mission

By Lorraine Riedl, Leadership Commissioner

God's ultimate plan is to unite all people to **become** one people of God, one body of Christ, one temple of the Holy Spirit with love that never ends. So, in the fullness of time, God sent his Son to be the redeemer and savior of the world. Jesus became man so we might know God's love for us. This is His mission.

Jesus said "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows as it." (Jn14:16-17) So, the Holy Spirit is actually "sent" to us. He is actually sent on a mission and that mission is the SAME mission as Christ. By the way, the word Apostle means "one who is sent".

The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (CCC 737). The mission of the Church is the SAME MISSION as Christ and the Holy Spirit. The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love. (CCC 850)

The Church is sent to:

- Announce
- Bear Witness
- Make Present
- And Spread the Mystery of the Communion of the Holy Trinity
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The Church is all the people of God, bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and lay faithful. This is US! "Every person, through these gifts given to him (referring to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit) is at once a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself" (CCC 913) Lumen Gentium states "It is the people's responsibility for the renewal and building up of the Church." It is imperative for us to spread the gift of the Gospel! We are meant to be sent!

Councils of Catholic Women work toward that goal by being witnesses. We witness Christ not only by fundraising and writing checks for worthy causes, but we witness Christ to each other and to the Community through our personal interactions.

But here is the issue at hand - we currently live in a world of lonely broken, abandoned people. People with no hope. We no longer live in a culture where Christianity is common practice. A lot of people have not heard or have not internalized the love God had for them - personally and intimately. If they do believe God exists, many believe in an impersonal God who is on the top spinning and is just sitting back and watching until the end.

What they so desperately need is God's love.

We are the one who need to bring God's love to them.





Fr Joe saw thousands of people suffering from malnutrition. He often told the story of meeting a young boy by his house. It was lunchtime and the little boy was outside playing soccer by himself. Father Joe asked him why he didn't go home to eat lunch. He responded, "it's not my day to eat".

When Father Joe Walijewski , a priest from our diocese went to Peru after a devastating earthquake, he told the bishop he wanted to stay longer because "the people, they have no hope.. Father Joe didn't become a leader of faith in the community doing great things all by himself, by by making a pot of soup to give out and accepting the help of others to do so. Eventually, he had several soup kitchens running. Many are still operating today. He met people on the streets and talked to them, always in his faulty Spanish, and with a smile on his face. He evangelized the poor by telling stories and showing love. He would proclaim Mass in an open-air vacant lot, still used by our priests.

He is our example of leadership and service. He built relationships personally, with face-to-face conversations. He built relationships of trust and mutual respect. His actions matched Gospel values. His actions spoke louder than words.

A schoolteacher once said to the parents "When we see them (the students) we see you (parents). When people saw Father Joe, they saw Jesus. When the community sees us, the Councils of Catholic Women, they should see Jesus through our love in action.

As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was leaving Bavaria to become the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he told his diocese:

"Let us dare to live like Jesus Christ. Let us have the courage to live the faith. Don't be talked into calling the old-fashioned or out-of-date! What is out-of-date and a failure is a materialistic lifestyle, all attempts to live a life without God. But Christ is not just yesterday and today, He is also tomorrow because eternity belongs to Him".

Paraphrasing Pope Paul VI, modern man does not listen to teachers, those who only talk, but they do listen to witnesses. In fact, we are sent to be witnesses at the close of every Mass.

Go in peace, glorifying the lord by your life.

Let us all live as missionaries of love.



Happy First Anniversary Post-Roe Era!

By Melanie Frei, Immediate Past President

The last week of June our Monroe Country Chapter of WI Right to Life organized a dinner to celebrate the extraordinary achievement of overturning Roe v. Wade. It was also a fundraiser as well as a way to increase support for local pro-life ministries. Our goal was to sell 100 tickets at \$30 each. For us, it was a gamble. Would people want to come to the event?

The first way that we celebrated the First Anniversary of the Post-Roe Era was by showing a PowerPoint we created honoring eight pro-life heroes and heroines who died before they could see the fruition of their life's work. Then, we celebrated by raising funds for Project Rachel (a ministry helping those suffering from the effects of abortion) and for a new pregnancy resource center in La Crosse. Hope's Door is actively raising funds to purchase a building and is developing a host of services, including medical, to meet the needs of mothers, babies, and families.

We are so thankful for the Lord's blessing: we sold every single ticket! We enjoyed a wonderful celebration, excellent food (catered by Pizonas), exhilarating fellowship, and great work! We presented a check for \$500 to Marie Allen for Project Rachel and a check for \$2,000 to Mike and Colleen Hackworth for Hope's Door. Many in the audience people made inquiries and gave thought to additional giving.

The big surprise of the night was encountering pro-abortion protestors who gathered outside our dinner venue. I was surprised that our celebration would make such a splash as to rate protestors. It also broke my heart when I realized that (1) while we were raising money to help women choose life, not death, for their babies, they were demonstrating for the right to kill pre-born babies; (2) while we were raising money to help women suffering from Post-Abortion Distress Syndrome, they were advocating a continuation of this harm to women.

I am proud of every person who attended our dinner. I pray for every person who protested our celebration.

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